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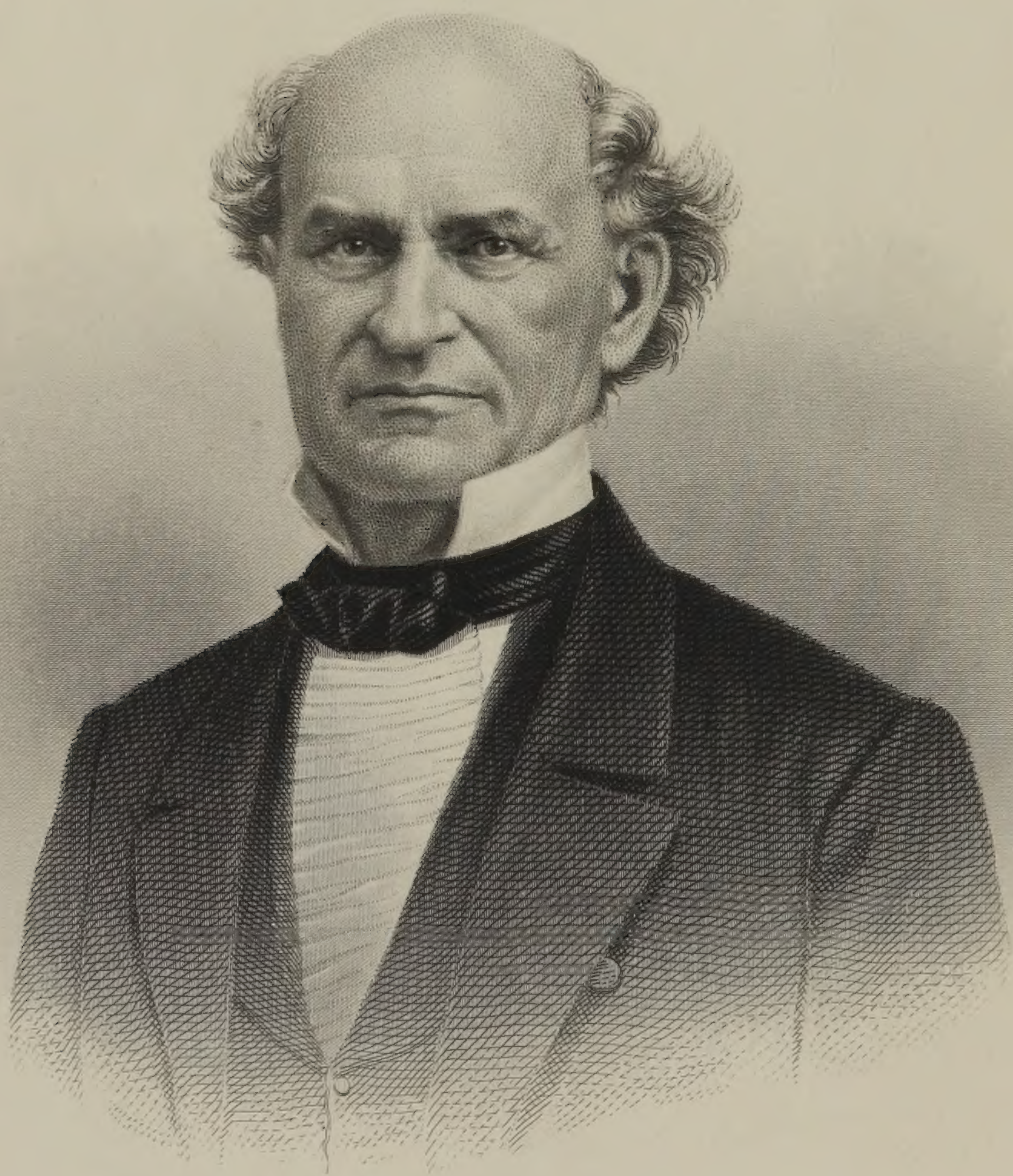
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No. 18403









Eng<sup>d</sup> by A H Ritchie.

*Alden March*



THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

ALDEN MARCH, M. D.

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AN ADDRESS

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

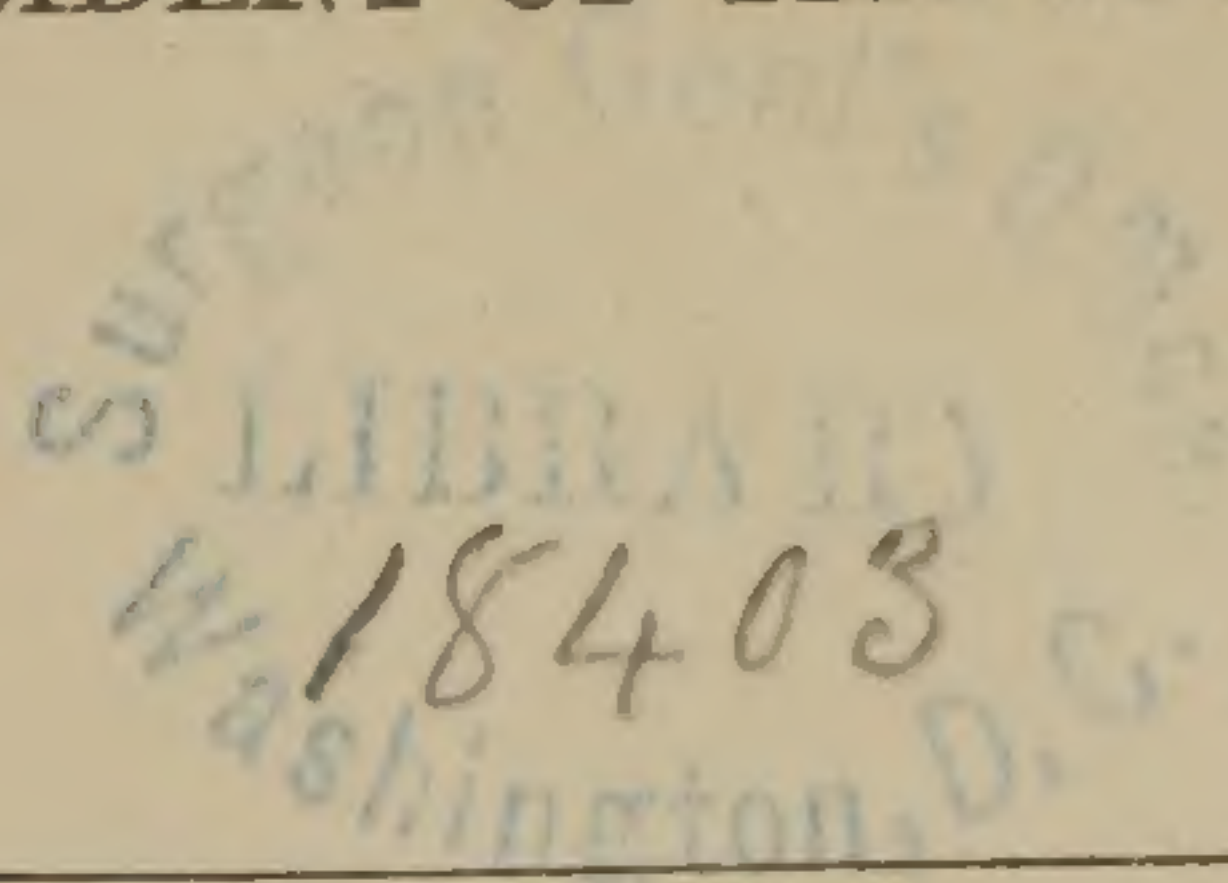
ALBANY COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING, NOV. 9, 1869,

BY

JAMES L. BABCOCK, M. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.



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REPRINTED FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY  
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# ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN :

“Sed omnes una manet nox,  
Et calcanda semel via lethi;”

thus sung the heathen poet. “This is the last of life; I am content;” thus taught the American statesman. “For me to die is gain;” thus preached the Christian apostle. “I am resigned to live or die.” “All is peace;” thus spake the dying physician.

That life has been illy spent which is not a wise preparation for the next. Dr. March lived under motives drawn from two worlds: that which now is, and that which is to come; and, thus living, he was prepared for both.

Hence, when death came, it found him with the armor on; fitted for usefulness here had he lived, and prepared for a glorious immortality when he died. The tracing of such a life is our present profitable duty.

## *His Birth.*

Doctor March was born in the town of Sutton, Worcester county, Massachusetts, September the 20th, 1795. The town has since been divided; and his birth-place is now in the town of Milbury. The town of Sutton has always been distinguished for the literary attainments of its inhabitants. It had peculiar educational advantages; its district schools were advanced to a high grade, and its arrangements for instruction were so complete, that young men could be fitted in those seminaries for college. Hence Sutton sent a larger proportion of its young men into the learned professions than any other town in New England.

## *His Ancestors.*

His ancestors were of English origin, and settled in Massachusetts, so long since that their descendants became identified with the early history of that State. The name of March first appears in the history of the town of Newbury, Massachusetts (now Newburyport), as early as 1653—216 years ago. The



names of John and George March appear at a later period. Daniel March, the grandfather of Dr. MARCH, was born in the town of Newbury, and subsequently removed to Sutton, where he owned a tract of land. Jacob March, the father of Dr. MARCH, was born in Sutton, June 17th, 1747, and died September 29th, 1814; aged 67 years. His mother, Eleanor Moore, daughter of Captain David Moore, sheriff of Worcester county, was born April 14th, 1761, and died February 25th, 1848; aged 87 years. Jacob March and Eleanor Moore were married July 4th, 1781. Their family consisted of twelve children, viz.: Samuel, John, David, Jacob, Tappan, Tyrus, Achsah, Jesse, ALDEN, Eleanor, Lucy, and Parmelia—eight boys and four girls. Of these eight were two physicians and surgeons, David and ALDEN; three farmers; one manufacturer and one merchant; one dying in infancy. There are five children now living, viz.: Samuel, aged 87, residing in Millbury, Mass.; Tappan, aged 81, residing in Stillwater, N. Y.; Tyrus, aged 79, residing in Millbury; Achsah, now Mrs. Haynes, aged 77, residing in Sturbridge, Mass.; and Parmelia, aged 67, residing in Millbury, Mass.

### *Early Life and Education.*

Dr. March spent his early years on his father's farm, working in the busy season and going to school in winter. When nineteen years of age, by the death of his father, the charge of the homestead devolved upon him for about one year, when he entered his brother's store, and continued with him also about a year. He then went to the Munson Academy, one of the first institutions of learning in the State. In the winter of 1817, being in his twenty-second year, he taught a writing school at Hoosick, Rensselaer county, in this State, and there also spent a part of the summer in quarrying and cutting slate stone for the roofing of houses. From thence he went to New York city, purposing to enter the mercantile business, but no satisfactory openings offering, he returned to Sutton.

### *His study of Medicine.*

His brother, Dr. David March, a surgeon in the United States army, suggested to him the study of medicine. To this he objected for two reasons: one, his limited means; the other, his limited education. The former of these objections being disposed of by two of his brothers, the latter he determined to overcome himself. Under the instruction of his brother, Dr. David March, he commenced the study of the Latin and Greek



languages and also the study of medicine. In 1818 and 1819 he attended medical lectures on anatomy and surgery at Boston, under the instruction of Dr. William Ingalls, who had acquired much celebrity as a lecturer and an anatomist, and who at that time was professor of anatomy in the medical department of Brown University, Rhode Island. Dr. March graduated at Brown University September 6, 1820, receiving the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Shortly after receiving his diploma he came to this State, and visited Cambridge, Washington county, where an elder brother resided, with the purpose of settling in that vicinity, but finding no satisfactory location, taught a district school for a short time. While here he performed his first surgical operation, which was for the remedy of that deformity known as hare-lip, and will be noticed more fully hereafter.

*Dr. March as a Student.*

“Be afraid of a man that knows one book!” Dr. March, when young had limited advantages, but he mastered the books he studied, and, in mastering them, he rose above those, in learning, who had many books, and mastered none. He was a scholar and he was a learned man in his profession; not so much from the number of the books he read as from their character and the way he read them. He made them his own. An author once studied, as he studied books, was ever after a part of himself. Nor was it books alone that made him the learned and eminent surgeon. He studied anatomy and surgery where he found the subjects and the cases. He gathered learning from the facts with which he met as well as from the authors he perused. An anecdote will best illustrate his want of opportunity and his determination to succeed in his profession. One day, as he was carrying a common soap box, containing some anatomical preparations with which he was making himself thoroughly acquainted, by most patient and minute application, a fellow-student remarked to him: “March, it is no use for you to try to make a distinguished man in your profession, since thousands, who have had far better advantages, have tried, and have failed to accomplish their object.” He said: “I leave it for others to decide as to the correctness of this prophecy.” To this his life was a reply, and in one of his letters of advice to a class of medical students, he says: “Every man is the architect of his own fortune. I think very much depends upon our own decisions. In the early part of my course, I placed my mark, and aimed at it with a fixed deter-



mination that I would reach it." Thus, young March became learned, successful, and eminent in his profession by being a student in the true meaning of the term.

### *His settlement in Albany.*

Dr. March became a resident of this city in the autumn of 1820, and went into partnership with Dr. Elias Willard, a gentleman of high social position, great moral worth, and of much professional celebrity. He remained with Dr. Willard one year, and in 1821 opened an office in North Market street (now Broadway), No. 457. In this office he remained twelve years. He then removed his office to the corner of North Market street and Maiden Lane, where, with the intermission of one year (in which he had an office where Mr. Treadwell's fur store in Bleecker hall now is, and a lecture room in the old Academy building, which stood in the rear of the present Delavan House), he remained until the spring of 1841, when he purchased the property in Hudson street, where he resided until his death.

### *His Partners.*

His first partner, as already stated, was Dr. Elias Willard. In 1827 he formed a partnership, which continued until 1830, with Dr. William Tully, formerly of New Haven, Conn., where, as well as in the Vermont Academy of Medicine, he was a distinguished professor. Dr. Tully died February 28th, 1859, in the 74th year of his age. To the profession the mention of the name of Dr. Tully brings the memory of one of the ablest physicians and medical professors of this country. In his department he was equaled by few, surpassed by none. The study of his partly published works instruct the student, elevate the author, and make us all feel what the profession and science have lost by the death of this learned and accomplished physician. In 1831 he formed a partnership with Dr. Henry Bronson, which continued until 1834, when Dr. Bronson removed to Waterbury, Conn., and subsequently became professor (and still continues) in the medical department of Yale College, and now is President of the Connecticut State Medical Society.

### *His Professional Life.*

Dr. March had for many years an extensive practice as a physician in all its departments, but his success in surgery compelled him to make surgery his speciality. Dr. March was



singularly correct in diagnosis. In his examination of patients, his eye, his touch, his judgment, illustrated his accuracy and consummate skill. He was quick to perceive and to meet any emergency or complication. He never seemed to be undecided as to what was to be done or how to do it. His inventive genius was ever at his command, and with promptness and efficiency he met the various exigencies of his many, many cases. In controlling his own feelings he commanded others; the operation performed, the determined surgeon became at once the kind and devoted physician. As an operator he was quick, dexterous, cautious, bold and successful. His professional eminence among his brethren and the public at large was due to him, and was most cheerfully awarded. In his later years none in northern and western New York, as a surgeon, equaled him; none in the southern, or the nation, surpassed him.

### *His Surgical Operations.*

We find no record of the surgical operations performed by Dr. March during ten years of his professional life. Yet those of which we have a record number seven thousand one hundred and twenty-four (7,124). A partial synopsis of his operations is as follows:

#### *Amputations.*

He amputated three hundred and thirteen times, of which sixty-five were through the thigh; thirty-six through the leg; seven through the tarsus; twenty-five through the arm; eighteen through the fore-arm; and two through the wrist.

#### *Dislocations.*

He reduced three hundred and nine dislocations, many of them of an unusual character; of which seven were of the inferior maxillary or the lower jaw; one hundred and thirty-six of the shoulder; seventy-five of the elbow; twenty of the wrist; seventeen of the hip-joint; four of the knee; one of the patella; ten of the ankle; and twelve of the astragalus and tarsus.

#### *Fractures.*

His cases of fractures number ten hundred and fourteen. Many of which were uncommon; indeed, to such he was constantly called. Of these, nineteen were of the cranium; six of the scapula; one hundred and eleven of the arm; eighty-three of the fore-arm, both bones; two hundred and nine of the



radius ; twenty-two of the ulna ; eleven of the olecranon process ; nine of the ribs ; one of the sternum ; one hundred and thirty-three of the femur ; sixteen of the patella ; one hundred and thirty-three, both bones, of the leg ; twenty-nine of the tibia ; and nineteen of the fibula.

He operated for non-union of bones twenty-six times ; for resection fifteen times, of which eleven were of the lower jaw ; for ankylosis of joints five times. He extirpated one thousand six hundred and sixty-two tumors, of every diversity of character and situation. Of this number, twenty-eight were osseous ; two cartilaginous ; one muscular ; twenty-one bursal ; four hundred and ninety-one malignant ; four hundred and ninety-two encysted. He operated for strangulated hernia one hundred and four times. Of which, for umbilical five times ; direct and oblique inguinal fifty-three times ; femoral forty-six times. He performed the operation of lithotomy forty-seven times ; ovariectomy seven times ; neurotomy seventeen times ; hydrocele, temporary relief, three hundred and forty-seven times ; for radical cure one hundred and eighteen times ; for paracentesis cranii three times ; thoracis eleven times ; abdominis seventy-seven times ; hydrops articuli twelve times ; fistulæ, in various situations, one hundred and seventy-nine times. Removed polypi, in various localities, one hundred and forty-five times. He operated for hare-lip one hundred and twenty-five times, of which, about fifty were double, with double cleft in jaw ; staphylorrhaphy nine times ; talicotian or rhinoplastic operation twelve times ; autoplasmic six times ; excision of the tonsils and uvulæ five hundred and forty-nine times ; for goitre once ; laryngotomy and tracheotomy seven times. Removed foreign bodies from the air passages fifty-three times ; extirpation of the eye, ten times. Operated for cataract one hundred and twenty-nine times ; strabismus two hundred and forty-nine times ; pterygium eighteen times ; myotomy and tenotomy two hundred and eighty-eight times ; ligated arteries forty-three times, of which the profunda, external iliac and common carotid were included ; aneurism of the larger arteries seven times ; spina bifida five times ; spina ventosa three times. He performed anomalous operations for the cure of deformities fifty times. While a full narration would not, at this time, be appropriate, yet it is deemed appropriate to speak of the following :

In 1820 he performed his first operation, which was for hare-lip. In a communication on clinical surgery, in 1854, he says :



“ In less than three weeks after receiving my diploma I operated on the infant of Mr. H., of White Creek, Washington county, N. Y., then about three weeks old, for relief of a tolerably fair case of hare-lip. All the surgical instruments I then possessed was a dissecting case, the knives of which were pretty well worn by eight months of almost constant dissection, while pursuing my professional instruction in Boston. I procured some common choppel sharp sewing needles, such as I had seen used by my preceptor, a kind brother, and who was surgeon's mate in the war of 1812, and with the aid of an ordinary pocket knife, which it is the custom of ‘the Yankee to use on various occasions,’ I whittled, out of soft pine wood, a thin spatula, which was used to support the lip, while the borders of the fissure were exercised upon it with the scalpel. With preparation so simple and imperfect, I resolved to make my *debut* in operative surgery, greatly to the fears, and almost under the protest, of my good old sainted mother, who lived until 1848, long enough to have all her doubts and fears, as to my success in this and other important and difficult surgical operations, fully settled.” He further says : “ I need not describe the steps of the operation, nor say that the excitement of the responsibility, of what was then regarded as a bold operation, caused huge drops of perspiration to bedew my flushed face. Suffice it to say, that I thought I had ‘put it up’ about right. Every thing went on pretty well until the third or fourth day, about the time for the removal of the needles, when the little patient was attacked with the infants’ aptha, or sore mouth, which resulted in destroying the adhesions in less than one week, when the sides of the fissure were as far asunder as before the operation. I satisfied the parents of the cause of failure, and, not doubting myself of ultimate success, determined to try again ; and that I might be better prepared for a second endeavor, I visited Albany, procured a work on surgery, a set of silver hare-lip suture pins, and under my directions a common blacksmith manufactured the forceps. The second operation was performed when the child was between two and three months old, and was completely successful.” In speaking of the cause of failure in the first operation, he says : “ Besides the sore mouth, I think there must have been another or other reasons of failure, such as are apt to prevail with most young operators—a fear of cutting away too much of the border of the fissure, and the neglect to insert the sutures, whether pins or thread, at a proper distance from the border of the cut margins, and of failing to



make them penetrate nearly through the entire thickness of the lip."

*Another Case.*

Mr. A., a farmer, aged about thirty years, had a tumor occupying the left side of the neck, as large as a pint bowl, egg-shaped, extending superiorly to the lobe of the ear, and inferiorly nearly to the clavicle. Speaking of this case, he says: "It is conceived that a faithful account of the history, operation and result of this case will be rendering a public service, although the operation proved unsuccessful, and therefore, in the minds of the illiberal, might reflect on the character of the operators. In my opinion, unsuccessful operations are often as highly important on the score of experience, not only to the individuals concerned, but to the medical profession at large, as are those that are crowned with the most triumphant success. Though, unfortunately for the improvement of surgery, the reports of such cases are too often kept from the public eye, either from fear of censure or loss of professional reputation. But in this instance, if we suffer from either source, we shall feel ourselves in part compensated, and more than acquitted from unjust charges, at least, when we shall have faithfully and honestly discharged this duty, which the public, and more especially the medical profession, seem to claim at our hands." After describing the various steps of the operation, he says: "While dissecting at the lower part of the tumor, the knife came in contact with the external jugular vein, very near the point where it unites with the internal jugular. The moment this happened, a phenomenon followed that seemed to startle all present. It was the noise of a strange rushing of air, as though the trachea or cavity of the thorax had been cut into, that seemed to foretell the result of the operation. The noise that followed the wounding of the vein was compared to that produced by turning liquid from a junk bottle. The patient was instantly seized with tremors and convulsions; was pulseless; lips became livid, frothed at the mouth, and the pupils of the eyes dilated to the greatest possible extent. The moment the source of the difficulty was discovered, the finger of an assistant was placed upon the mouth of the wounded vein, and there held, while the operation was suspended for a few moments, and in the mean time the patient was partially aroused by the use of diffusible stimuli. The operation was resumed, and in the course of ten or twelve minutes completed. And within five, or ten minutes, at farthest, the patient breathed his last without a struggle." He continues:



“Soon after the occurrence of this disastrous case, we lost no time in searching all the works on surgery, and such periodicals as came within our reach, to find a parallel case, or any circumstances that would lead a surgeon to be cautious how he opened veins in the immediate vicinity of the heart. And with all diligence we discovered but one of a similar nature, and in which the operation was followed by a similar result. It was a case that occurred, and was reported by M. Dupuytren. Had Dupuytren’s case, together with some rules to be observed, in order to avoid the occurrence of such accidents, in performing operations about the neck, been embodied in our standard works on surgery, it is very probable we might have saved the life of our patient. At all events, I think we should have been saved the sore mortification of seeing him expire upon the operating table. In order to give a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena that followed the wounding of the vein, it required considerable research in the science of physiology. One thing, however, appears certain, that death was the result of the introduction of air into the cavity of the heart.” He says: “I came to this conclusion not only from the experience I had in the fatal case here related, but from an experiment which I tried on a cat. The jugular vein of a cat was exposed and laid open, a blow-pipe introduced, and with one puff of the breath the cat was thrown into convulsions, and within three minutes was dead. On dissection we found the right side of the heart and the large veins filled with air, which was the cause of death.” This report was copied into Cooper’s *Surgical Dictionary of Practical Surgery* of 1830, pages 509 and 510. Under the head of Tumors, the following is there added: “A highly interesting case of tumor in the neck, in which the operation for its removal was performed by Professor Alden March, of Albany, N. Y. And although this operation was unsuccessful, yet the cause of its failure was apparent, and ought to be known to the profession, that it may be avoided in future surgical wounds in which the neck is to be involved. The operation was performed in August, 1829, and the patient died upon the table from the introduction of air into the cavity of the heart through the external jugular vein.” He says: “Dr. March’s experiments on this subject may be of the highest practical importance, and the explanation of the remarkable phenomena, which followed the wounding of a vein, in this and other cases, is a physiological problem, the solution of which, if accomplished, will be of the deepest interest to the profession and to humanity.” This



report was also copied into Gibson's Surgery, vol. 2, pp. 441 and 442, in connection with operations on varicose veins, which says: "In performing operations upon veins, the surgeon should be aware of the danger of air entering their cavities. Several interesting cases have been reported by Dupuytren, Sir Astley Cooper, Roux, Warren, Mott and Stephens, of death from this cause, or of the patient being saved by pressure on the orifice in the vein, or by the timely operation of encircling it with a ligature. The most interesting case of all, however, is that reported by Professor March, of Albany, the candid relation of which does him great credit." I have selected his first case of surgery, and successful operation, and his first case of unsuccessful, aware that these two cases illustrate the man and the surgeon. He was ever anxious to present the facts and the truth, whether the result was favorable or unfavorable. He seemed to forget himself in his great anxiety to advance the cause of science; and, in the solemn consciousness that he had done his duty, he stated the result of a professional effort, relying upon the intelligence of his professional brethren, who, with all the facts of the case before them, would feel he deserved success, could it have been attained.

### *Inventions.*

In the Transactions of the American Medical Association of 1853, on pages 505 and 506, we find, in connection with his essay on morbus-coxarius, mention of an invention designed by him, to fulfill a very important indication in the treatment of this disease. In speaking of this improvement, he remarks: "The structure of the splint is designed to obviate all pressure on the trochanter-major." "The treatment of hip disease by the use of the long splint, I believe, was first suggested and employed by our late distinguished countryman, Dr. Physick, of Philadelphia. The only object he had in view was to secure rest and perfect immobility of the joint."

In the Transactions of the New York State Medical Society of 1855, page 126, we find an essay by Dr. March, on improved forceps for hare-lip operation. He says: "To prevent the notch that is so apt to follow the old method, of operating by straight incisions, two plans have been adopted, one with a semi-circular cut from top to bottom, and the other with straight lines, from the top to the upper border of the red part of the lip, and from thence toward the fissure, at an angle of about forty-five degrees." The instrument I have caused to be constructed is



designed to combine the semi-circular line of the Edinburgh surgeon and angular line of Malgaigne. It says: "By the aid of this instrument the lip can be securely held, while its shape affords a sure guide in making the line of incision in such a way as shall secure all the advantages of both, a semi-circular and angular border."

Dr. Bryan, Professor of Surgery in the Philadelphia College of Medicine, in speaking of Professor March's essay on improved forceps for hare-lip operation, says: "It embodied so much that is valuable that we think this production of one of the most distinguished surgeons of New York ought to be made to assume a permanent form, and be embodied in the standard works."

In 1860 Dr. March also invented instruments for the removal of dead bone; and, in 1867, employed a new method for removing urinary calculi. This is not the place to speak of the importance of these inventions, or even describe them in detail; it is enough for me to bring them to your notice at this time, feeling that every distinguished surgeon in this audience, as well as elsewhere, is aware of the importance of these inventions to the profession.

#### *Dr. March as a Lecturer.*

Dr. March, it is believed, delivered the first course of lectures ever given in this city, on anatomy, with demonstrations and dissections of the recent subject. They were delivered to a class of fourteen students, in the fall of 1821. His first lecture was written, but in the second he attempted to extemporize, relying on a few notes only; the result was a failure so complete, that despairing of success, he would perhaps, but for the encouraging words of a medical friend, been tempted to have abandoned the project. But he persisted, and the course was successfully completed. In speaking of this course of lectures, he said: "The first subjects ever dissected for public demonstration, to medical students in Albany, I procured from Boston, by what might now be called the overland route, by horse power across the Green Mountains, for you will please bear in mind there was no railroad communication at this time. It was then that I prepared arterial anatomical specimens, and formed the nucleus of the museum of the Albany Medical College." The following year he fitted up a lecture room in the rear of his office, on North Market street, now Broadway, where he continued his lectures, and dissections, his class



increasing to forty students. These lectures were illustrated with anatomical and pathological preparations made by himself. In 1825, he was appointed professor of anatomy and physiology, in the Vermont Academy of Medicine, at Castleton, at that time one of the best medical colleges in this country, which position he filled with his usual ability for ten years, at the same time continuing his private course in this city. The faculty of the Vermont Academy of Medicine were: William Tully M. D., President; Theodore Woodward, M. D., Registrar. Professors: William Tully, M. D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic and Medical Jurisprudence; Theodore Woodward, M. D., Professor of the principles and practice of Surgery, Obstetrics, and diseases of Women and Children; Alden March, M. D., Professor of Anatomy and Physiology; Jonathan A. Allen, M. D., Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy; Lewis C. Beck, M. D., Professor of Chemistry and Natural History; Solomon Foot, A. M., Professor of Natural Philosophy.

In 1835 Dr. March resigned his professorship in the Vermont Academy of Medicine, and applied himself to his increasing practice and private lectures in this city.

In 1827 the Albany Medical Seminary was established. Its professors were: William Tully, M. D., Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine; Alden March, M. D., Professor of Anatomy and Physiology; Lewis C. Beck, M. D., Professor of Chemistry and Natural History.

There were two lecture terms at this institution during the year. The first commenced in January, and continued ten weeks; the second in May, and continued twelve weeks. In the circular of 1827 we find the following: "Convenient rooms have been provided containing a good library, the most valuable anatomical museum in this part of the country, collections of minerals, plants, etc. Open to students under the direction of the instructors."

In 1833 the Albany Medical School was established in place of the Albany Medical Seminary. Its instructors were Edwin James, M. D., on Chemistry and Natural History; Alden March, M. D., on Anatomy, Physiology and Operative Surgery; Henry Green, M. D., on Obstetrics, and Diseases of Women and Children; William Tully, M. D., on Materia Medica, Pharmacy and Therapeutics; Theodore Woodward, M. D., on the Principles and Practice of Surgery; John James, M. D., on Theory and Practice of Medicine.



The lecture term commenced the first Wednesday of March, and continued three months. The following announcement is found in the catalogue: "In consequence of the extent and completeness of the medical lectures given in this school, entire courses of its lectures will be received toward graduation, at the Vermont Academy of Medicine, the same as courses in any regular medical institution."

In 1834 he established Dr. March's Practical School for Anatomy and Surgery, the Albany Medical School being broken up by a disastrous fire which destroyed the building, and with it much of Dr. March's valuable anatomical and pathological preparations. In this school clinical lectures were given, and practical remarks were made upon diseases and cases. Its instructors were Alden March, M. D., James H. Armsby, M. D.

When the Albany Medical College was established in 1838, Dr. March was appointed Professor of Surgery in that institution, giving his first course of lectures the ensuing year, 1839, and remaining Professor of Surgery until his death, a period of thirty-one years.

The Faculty of the college were: Alden March, M. D., President; Ebenezer Emmons, M. D., Professor of Chemistry and Natural History; James H. Armsby, M. D., Professor of Anatomy and Physiology; David M. Reese, M. D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine; Alden March, M. D., Professor of Surgery; Henry Greene, M. D., Professor of Obstetrics, and the Diseases of Women and Children; David M. McLachlan, M. D., Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy; Amos Dean, Esq., Professor of Medical Jurisprudence; James H. Armsby, M. D., Dean of the Faculty.

But one member of this Faculty, Dr. Armsby, is living. From the circular of the College of 1838, we make the following extract: "The morbid anatomical specimens in the museum are very numerous and valuable, having been collected principally by the Professor of Surgery during an extensive practice and public courses of dissection for many years, and are capable of illustrating a great variety of surgical diseases." It further states that: "It is designed to secure instruction in clinical and surgical practice, which the permanent residence of most of the professors as practitioners in Albany, will enable them to guarantee."

Although the establishment of surgical clinics was claimed by another city, yet we believe Albany was the first to inaugu-



rate this mode of imparting medical instruction ; and the honor should be conceded to Dr. March, as the first to organize surgical clinics in this country. In closing our remarks on Dr. March as a lecturer, some idea may be formed of the extent and success of his labors by the enumeration of his lectures. He delivered ten courses of lectures on Anatomy and Physiology, in the Vermont Academy of Medicine ; thirty-six courses of lectures on Surgery, in the Albany Medical College, and seventeen private courses of lectures on Anatomy, Physiology and Operative Surgery in Albany.

*The Albany Medical College and Hospital.*

On the 11th of January, 1830, Dr. March, then a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in the Vermont Academy of Medicine, delivered a lecture on the expediency of establishing a Medical College and Hospital in this city, introductory to a course on Anatomy and Operative Surgery. A committee was appointed by those who heard that lecture, consisting of L. Wellington, M. D., A. F. Lawyer, M. D., and Dr. O. Crosby, Jr., to request a copy of that address for publication. To which Dr. March assented. "Hoping, thereby," as he said in his letter to the committee, "to advance in some degree the interests of the cause already auspiciously commenced." The Doctor presents his argument thus : "First, it will be necessary for us to show that the location of this city is good, possessing many advantages, and but few disadvantages. Second, that an institution of this kind is required in this place, and that it will be useful to the public ; and, third, that the object is practicable." The Doctor then proceeds with the proof of these positions. It is not necessary to repeat that argument thirty-nine years after it was made by the distinguished originator of the Albany Medical College and Hospital. We, his professional brethren, who have met here to-day to pay respect to his memory, are the witnesses of the wisdom of that argument in the present success of the college and hospital. The graduates of the Albany Medical College, including those of 1869, number one thousand and ninety-five. Dr. March was president of the Faculty and Professor of Surgery from the commencement of the college, and from the commencement of the hospital a member of the staff and one of its attending surgeons. His donations to the college were one thousand dollars, and his anatomical and pathological preparations, numbering two thousand



and sixty-seven. His donations to the hospital were one thousand dollars, and twenty years of service. In making his donation to the hospital he accompanied it with the following letter, which I beg leave to repeat :

*“ To the Governors of the Albany Hospital :*

“ GENTLEMEN — Having long felt a deep and abiding interest in the public charity under your control and direction, having tendered my professional services from its inception, and having discharged the duties of attending surgeon, according to the best of my ability, for the last fifteen years, I now feel as though the time had arrived when it becomes my duty, as well as my great pleasure, to give a little pecuniary aid to an institution which might be capable of a wider sphere of usefulness but for the want of more pecuniary means.

“ I herewith enclose my check for one thousand dollars, which I wish to be safely invested, so that the annual interest of which, or such portion of it as the medical staff and governors of said hospital may deem necessary, be appropriated for procuring surgical instruments and surgical apparatus, and for keeping the same and those already on hand in repair, and the pathological specimens already collected, and those that may be hereafter collected, in good condition. Gentlemen, I trust you will suffer the object and the occasion to be my apology for introducing a reminiscence of by-gone days, of little consequence, it is true, except as it relates only to two objects, to me of the most intense interest. I refer to the Albany Medical College and Hospital. Among my collection of pamphlets I find one entitled ‘A Lecture on the Expediency of Establishing a Medical College and Hospital in the City of Albany,’ delivered January 11th, 1830, by Alden March, M. D., the concluding paragraph of which is in the following language : ‘Gentlemen, I cannot conclude without expressing the well-grounded hope that the efforts now making by the friends of knowledge and benevolence will be continued and rewarded with success ; that ere long our city will be able to boast of a well conducted medical college and hospital, institutions favorable alike to the interests of society and humanity.’ ” He continues : “ To have realized, long ago, the above ‘well-grounded hope,’ expressed about thirty-five years since, and to have been humbly instrumental, so far as my time and services were concerned, in its accomplishment, constitutes one of the happiest events of my



long and eventful life. That your supervision of the Albany Hospital may be crowned with eminent success, is the fervent prayer of

Yours, respectfully and truly,

“ALDEN MARCH.

“ALBANY, *November 25th*, 1864.”

*Membership of Medical Societies and some of the Offices held by him.*

1832 and 1833. President of the Albany County Medical Society.

1857. President of the New York State Medical Society.

1864. President of the American Medical Association, and one of its founders.

Honorary member of the Massachusetts State Medical Society ; the Pennsylvania State Medical Society ; the Connecticut State Medical Society ; and the Rhode Island State Medical Society.

1861. He was chairman of the commission appointed to examine candidates for the volunteer service of the State of New York. There were two hundred and forty-three candidates, a large portion being graduates of the Albany Medical College.

1862 and 1863. Member of the Auxiliary Corps of Volunteer Surgeons of this State. 1841. Corresponding member of the National Institution for the promotion of science at Washington, D. C.

Member of the Young Men's Association of this city ; member of the Young Men's Christian Association ; President Board of Trustees First Presbyterian Church ; President Albany City Tract and Missionary Society ; Trustee of the Albany Medical College ; Trustee of the Dudley Observatory ; Trustee Albany Rural Cemetery ; Trustee Albany University.

The degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by Williams College, in 1868. 1869. Honorary Member of the “Institut des Archivistes de France.”

In these societies he took deep interest, especially those connected with his profession, of which he was an active member, and labored with earnest devotion for the promotion and spread of medical science. Their honors were freely awarded him without his seeking to acquire distinction.

*Addresses, Essays, and Reports of Cases.*

We are indebted to him for a series of most valuable papers. The following are some of them :

1821. Essay upon dissection of the human body.



1822. Essay upon establishing a medical college and hospital in this city.

1823. Essay on the best method to be pursued in the study of medical science.

1829. Essay on reporting unsuccessful as well as successful cases.

1829. Report of a complicated obstetrical case.

1829. Report of an unsuccessful operation, and experiments on animals.

1830. Essay or lecture on the expediency of establishing a medical college and hospital in this city.

1830. A plea for establishing a medical journal in this city.

1831. Essay on the establishment of an asylum for the insane in this city.

1831. Report on some of the defects in the hospital department of the Albany county almshouse.

1832. Report on the sanitary condition of this city in reference to the epidemic cholera, and suggestions for the establishment of temporary hospitals.

1833. Address before the Albany County Medical Society. Subject: The epidemic cholera.

1834. His second address before the Albany County Medical Society. Subject: Surgical cases, and reports of some of his more important surgical operations.

1847. Essay on prosecutions for malpractice.

1847. Essay on frequent meetings of medical societies.

1849. Report of a successful operation for ovariotomy.

1849. Description of Malgaigne's instrument for maintaining apposition in those oblique fractures of the tibia, in which the superior fragment obstinately tends to overlap the inferior, which was published in the Trans. of the A. M. A.

1852. Reply to Dr. Samuel Jackson, of Northumberland, Penn., on the proposed re-organization of the American Medical Association.

1852. Report of an operation of lithotomy.

1852. Paper on Strangulated Hernia and Reducible; published in the Western Lancet.

1853. An essay on morbus coxarius, or hip-disease, and report of his investigations. Published in Trans. of the A. M. A.

1853. Report of a case of backward dislocation of the astragalus.

1854. Paper on penetrating wounds of the abdomen with punctured wounds of the intestines. Penetrating wounds of



the larynx, and their treatment, with cases for illustration, and their medico-legal aspect.

1854. Report of an operation for extirpation of tumor from the neck.

1854. Essay on clinical surgery.

1855. Essay on Improved Forceps for Hare-lip operation.

1856. Essay on Four Months in Europe.

1856. Essay on Encysted Osseous Tumors.

1857. Semi-centennial address before N. Y. S. Medical Society.

1858. Essay on an interesting case of Urinary Calculi.

1858. Essay on Intra Capsular Fracture of the Cervix Femoris, with bony union.

1859. Essay on Ectopia A Cordis.

1861. Report of a case of Compound Comminuted and Complicated Fracture of the upper part of Tibia.

1861. Report on Medical Education.

1861. Biographical sketch of Prof. Lewis C. Beck, M. D.

1863. Essay on Prof. Nelaton's Probe for Gunshot Wounds in Bones.

1864. Address before American Medical Association.

1867. Essay on an unusual place of lodgment and exit of Biliary Calculus.

1867. Essay on New Method employed in removing Urinary Calculi.

1867. Essay on the Relations of the Periosteum to Osteogenesis.

1868. Essay on Scirrhus, or Malignant Disease of the Rectum, and report of the successful operation for its removal.

1869. Report of a Case of Spontaneous Lithotomy.

Nearly all these essays and reports were read by him before the New York State Medical Society, and published in the Transactions. Allow me to call your attention briefly to two of these essays. First: Intra Capsular Fracture of Cervix Femoris with Bony Union. After submitting his views and exhibiting his Pathological specimens and their history with reference to this character of fracture, he says: "I shall advocate the doctrine of *complete fracture within the capsular ligament, and union by ossific deposit without impaction*. I wish the profession to examine the specimens accurately and minutely in every respect. I am content to submit the whole subject to the decision of competent judges to decide, whether the facts are not sufficiently numerous, clear and convincing, to warrant the conclusion at which I have arrived." \* \* \* \*



In 1841, 1848 and 1856, Dr. March visited Europe, not only to perfect himself in his profession, but also to investigate critically, that grave malady, *morbus coxarius*, or hip disease. He says: "For many years I have looked upon the writings of Sir Astley Cooper as the most reliable of any in the English language. He was my oracle. Nevertheless, with all this rare combination of a variety of talents, it is possible that even a great and a good man may be mistaken. The views which I am about to present concerning the pathological condition of the hip-joint when occupied by the affection commonly called 'hip disease' and its treatment, I am fully aware, will differ widely from the commonly expressed opinion of almost all surgical writers and teachers. Nearly every surgical author *assumes* that *spontaneous dislocation* of the hip is not unfrequently the result of *absorption*, *ulceration*, or *destruction* of the ligaments of the joint and of the acetabulum, and of contraction of the muscles surrounding the joint.

"I shall take the position that *spontaneous dislocation* of the *hip* (as purely the result of morbid action, unaided by superadded violence) seldom or never takes place; I also propose to point out a mode of treatment by which *progressive absorption* of the acetabulum and head of the bone may be arrested before the life of the patient is endangered by the progress of the disease. If it should be asked upon what ground I found the proof and argument to sustain my doctrine, and why I dare oppose the weight of the highest surgical authority on this subject, I will answer that my convictions are based upon actual observation, and personal examination, of about forty pathological museums in this country and in Europe, and of the examination of the bony specimens of the hip-joint of some of those who had evidently died while laboring under a severe form of the disease." He continues, "I made it my business to examine critically every morbid specimen of the hip-joint, and with paper and pencil in hand, made a record on the spot of the number of the specimens, and classified them according to the nature of their respective organic changes. I have had an opportunity of personally examining about two hundred specimens of what I took to be hip disease, and as I learned to be such, and arrived at the following conclusion that *ulcerative absorption produced the change in the articulation of the joint*, which was *too often called dislocation*. If my views are sustained by facts; if the theory of practice upon the plan of *permanent extension* becomes an *established principle*



in the treatment of hip disease in an advanced stage, or even before any great organic change has taken place in the joint, I shall have accomplished my object; and, I trust, have contributed a trifle to the advancement of surgical science." In these two essays the views entertained by Dr. March were at variance with the received opinions of the profession, not only of this country but of Europe. The ideas he advanced produced much discussion; but his clear and logical arguments, with the facts presented and the pathological specimens for his proof, his deductions could not be easily overthrown. Some members of our profession, forgetting how much they are indebted to the experience of others, neglect to contribute their discoveries in medical science. While not intending to be illiberal, they fail to perform their duty in this respect. Dr. March did not belong to this class. Three ideas seemed to have always been prominent and inseparable in his mind—the welfare of his patients, his own scientific growth, and the elevation of his profession. As the two former led him to profound thought and thorough investigation, the latter induced him to communicate to others the results of his experience when novel or peculiar. The exhausting labor of an extensive practice did not deter him from this duty. He accomplished his mission by a systematic arrangement of his duties and the punctual performance of them. Conspicuous rather as a practical surgeon than as a writer, Dr. March did not receive the extensive recognition of his eminent ability. Could a sufficient portion of his time been devoted to embodying in a surgical treatise the ripe knowledge of his thorough study and experience, that work would have commanded the respect of scientific men even beyond the limits of our own country. We can not but regret he has not left us such a legacy.

### *His Domestic Life.*

Dr. March married Miss Joanna P. Armsby, daughter of Mr. Silas Armsby of the town of Sutton, Mass., February 22d, 1824. His family consisted of four children, two boys and two girls. Two died in infancy. The others are residents of this city, Miss Joanna March, wife of David I. Boyd, Esq., and Henry March, M. D., a practicing physician of this city. Mrs. March died April 17th, 1861, aged 62 years. His domestic relations had been all that a kind and devoted husband and father, and an affectionate and accomplished wife and mother could make them. From that affliction he never recovered; and though he bowed in resigna-



tion to the will of God, he bowed with a broken heart. Alluding to the death of his wife afterward, at a time of public affliction, he remarked: "To some of us at least in the past few months the crushing hand of bereavement, and the weight of severe domestic affliction have saddened our hearts and cast a gloom over our households, and surely upon no one with a greater degree of severity than upon him whose privilege it is now to address you."

### *His Religious Life.*

Dr. March became a member of the First Presbyterian church of this city in 1842. An intimate friend of his, in speaking of Dr. March as a professor of religion, said: "The crowning glory of Dr. March's character was his consistent Christianity. Always punctual and in his place, performing all the external duties pertaining to his Christian profession, both in the church and in his family. In his death the church has lost a consistent Christian." Another, speaking of Dr. March's religious character, said: "Meekly did he take up, and manfully did he bear the crosses which were laid in his pathway; and beautifully did he illustrate, in his pure and earnest life, the power which that faith which he professed exerted upon the inner man." His benevolence was large in the full meaning of that term, and he exemplified the injunction of his Master, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Nor was it only in giving of alms and charities as an individual, that he silently, yet efficiently, performed his duties; but, also as a member of his profession, he was the servant of the public, as humane physicians are, and none but physicians can be. In peace in his daily walks, he illustrated the duties of private life. In war, whether on the field of battle or in the hospitals of the nation, by his contributions and his presence, he exemplified his obedience to the precept that "the republic expects every man to do his duty." His patriotism was part of his religion.

### *His last Illness and Death.*

Dr. March, with the exception of occasional attacks of headache, enjoyed in his later years almost uninterrupted health; the result of his well regulated habits of life.

About the middle of May last, he felt the symptoms of approaching illness which terminated his life. On the 27th, he visited his daughter, where he became quite sick and remained all night, expecting to return to his home the following day, but



he was not able. No alarming symptoms appeared until Monday of the following week, when he began to grow worse; Wednesday found him more comfortable. On Thursday he began to fail; Friday he rallied, and his physician spoke hopefully of his recovery. On Saturday (the third week of his illness), his symptoms became quite unfavorable, and continued so throughout the day and night. Feeling his near approach to death, he summoned his family, friends, and those who for many years had been fellow-laborers with him in his profession, and with words of cheer and of counsel bade them farewell. He lingered until Thursday, June 17th, 1869, when he died. Thus, gentlemen, have I endeavored to present you the life of this distinguished physician and surgeon, the late Dr. Alden March.

Let us cherish his memory, emulate his virtues, imitate his example, following him as he followed the great Physician of our race.

“ So live, that when thy summons comes, to join  
The innumerable caravan that moves  
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go, not like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams !”

“ How bless'd the righteous when he dies !  
When sinks a weary soul to rest ;  
How mildly beam the closing eyes,  
How gently heaves th' expiring breast !

“ So fades a summer cloud away ;  
So sinks the gale, when storms are o'er,  
So gently shuts the eye of day,  
So dies a wave along the shore.

“ A holy quiet reigns around ;  
A calm, which life, nor death, destroys ;  
Nothing disturbs that peace profound  
Which his unfettered soul enjoys.

“ Life's duty done, as sinks the clay,  
Light from its load the spirit flies ;  
While heav'n and earth combine to say,  
How bless'd the righteous when he dies !”



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THE  
LIFE AND CHARACTER  
OF  
ALDEN MARCH, M. D.

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AN ADDRESS  
BY  
JAMES L. BABCOCK, M. D.

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18403

*With the Author's Compliments.*











